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HURON CHURCH NEWS

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The day I have run out of excuses: Short reflection on a long journey

Mark Wilton was one of the four new deacons ordained on Trinity Sunday

By Rev. Mark Wilton

God is present in our lives. I've always known this.

With help from the Holy Spirit constantly prodding and guiding me along I have finally run out of excuses. More than 50 years have passed since I first felt God's call.

Yes, 50 years of excuse making and doubting. The amazing thing that I have found in this journey was God does not take NO for an answer. God definitely does have a plan for us even when we refuse to accept it.

As I progressed through my education, I continually saw roadblocks that I perceived as reasons to believe my call was not real, that it was not genuine. But every time I would reach one, a new path would be revealed, a new doorway would open.

On Trinity Sunday, June 4, the excuse making ended in a feeling that simply just cannot be put to words. God had called me to ordination. Three of my friends and I called to be his servants. To lead and serve God's people.

During the service of ordination, God's presence was felt

by myself. It grew and I felt it most strongly during the bishop's examination. It was not said aloud during the service during the "I believe I am so called", the "I do's", and the "I wills" in the back of my mind the conversation was with God and the simple "I wills" in my mind were followed by "with your help". I am certain now of my call and faithful in my answers because in all things on this journey toward ordination were made possible with God's help.

Give thanks, Give praise.
Be well. Be safe.
God Bless.

June 4, 2023 (Trinity Sunday) at St. Paul's Cathedral, London, Ontario. Mark Wilton was ordained deacon along with BJ Dunbar, Diana Boland and Patrick Martin.
(Photo: Charlotte Poolton)

► Page 7: Rev. Diana Boland: WHEN GOD INTERVENES: YOU'RE NOT DONE YET (Reflection on ordination)

Missionary to Missioner: Decolonization is a myth

Decolonization as we understand it is a myth. The legislative and structural racism and greed that give foundation to empire building are simply not undone with the passing of laws or the reading of books. This underlying system of oppression is implicit in everything we do, and cannot be excised with the same tools that built it. (...)

What we are striving for with Indigenous Ministries is a Gospel understanding of creation. The Two Row Wampum is our ancient bedrock document, which was about the sojourner relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, in which we can walk the land together for the goodness of our communities.

Thus, what we suggest is not a degradation of structure, but rather the inverse of empire, the Kingdom of Heaven; the example we have of collective action and salvation in our Gospel readings, and the way Jesus inaugurated for us thousands of years ago, calling us to a self-emptying of power and privilege and a filling of the Spirit. (...)

Psalm 137 gives us the line: *How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?* This Psalm is a psalm of lament. It is the lament of the dispossessed. But what are we to be dispossessed of? Power and privilege and our empire status. Christendom and dominion over faith and spiritual matters."

We are singing the Lord's song in strange lands, but we can no longer be the church of the expansionist Gospel, the missionaries sent out to transform the world into our image. We must excise those empire impulses and learn a little something from Indigenous peoples all around the world."

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Rev. Hana Scorrar: HOW INDIGENOUS MINISTRY IS GOING TO SAVE THE CHURCH

Huron to host General Synod in 2025



The announcement came on the last day of the 43rd session of General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada in Calgary, July 2, 2023: The Diocese of Huron will host the next session of General Synod in 2025 in London! We will be delighted to welcome delegates/members to Huron, and we are grateful for the honour.

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Bishop Todd: CHALLENGES AND JOYS OF GENERAL SYNOD

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Rev. Canon Grayhame Bowcott: GENERAL SYNOD – THE ANGLICAN CHURCH AT ITS BEST

Huron Archives receive federal funding to improve the state of the Mohawk Institute records

The Verschoyle Phillip Cronyn Memorial Archives (Huron Archives) received funding through the Documentary Heritage Communities Program (DHCP) developed by Library and Archives Canada.

This funding will make it possible to attempt to correct the continuous injustice caused by the state of the Mohawk Institute records.

The Archives have partnered with Six Nations Public Library, Woodland Cultural Centre, and the Survivors' Secretariat to ensure that the work is community-led and centres the information needs and voices of the Hodinohsho:ni community. The funding will be used to hire two roles from the Hodinohsho:ni community to conduct the work of the rework project.

The Mohawk Institute was a residential school located in Brantford, Ontario. It was in operation from 1828 to 1970.



Let there be greening

ASSEMBLY 2023

CALGARY, ALBERTA

ACC GENERAL SYNOD: JUNE 27 – JULY 2
 ELEC SPECIAL CONVENTION: JUNE 28 – JULY 2

Challenges and joys of General Synod

From June 27 to July 2 the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada met in Calgary, Alberta. The Diocese of Huron was well represented by Kyle Gascho, Dorothy Patterson, Paul Townshend, Pam Walters, Grayhame Bowcott, Jane Humphreys, Tanya Phibbs, and me.



**BISHOP
TODD
TOWNSHEND**

existence. What a gift it is to grow in communion and to learn from the faithfulness of each church.

A large portion of the gathering is worship and informal times of prayer, meals, and fellowship. It is always astonishing to be in a room where people are gathered from every part of Canada. There is a powerful unity in this diverse gathering, even when we sometimes find the differences to be difficult. There are so many good and faithful people in our church.

Anglicans were not alone in this meeting as we also gathered in "Assembly" with delegates from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, our full-communion partners. In this Assembly we welcomed the Moravian Church into full communion with us, as well. The Moravian Church is one of the oldest Protestant churches in

Another large part of the meeting is to hear about, and debate, "resolutions" – and there were many.

Listening well is one of the challenges and joys of Gen-

eral Synod. Sitting for long periods of time takes energy and dedication! We pray that all these voices reveal the voice and will of God for us – so, the work is holy. If you would like to see details of these resolutions and their outcomes, please go to <https://assembly.anglicanlutheran.ca>

General Synod also does the work of electing lay and clergy leadership for the period between sessions.

Archdeacon Tanya Phibbs was elected to serve as Deputy Prolocutor, a senior officer of General Synod, (in addition to her work in Huron) for the next two years. Congratulations, Tanya! She will join Dorothy Patterson, also of Huron (Six Nations of the Grand), who was elected to the Council of General Synod (COGS, the executive body serving between General Synod sessions).

Many other Huron leaders serve on the various commit-

tees and councils of our national church. Thank you, all!

I was grateful for the many people who made this large gathering possible and fruitful. I was especially grateful for our Primate, Archbishop Linda Nicholls, for her leadership throughout these past four years and in this meeting. Her skill and faithfulness were constantly evident, but it may have been most clear in her powerful homily at the closing Eucharist. This will be Archbishop Linda's last General Synod as she will retire before the next meeting in 2025. Thank you, +Linda.

Speaking of the next meeting – it was announced at the closing banquet that the Diocese of Huron will host the 44th session of General Synod in 2025 in London! We will be delighted to welcome delegates/members to Huron and we're grateful for the honour.

+Todd

Letting God know your concerns...

By Libi Clifford

It's September again – the month that can never make up its mind whether it is summer or fall. Perhaps that is why it is a favourite month for so many people. It is the best of both seasons.

For churches, it is often a month of changes - new beginnings, a reset from the problems of the winter and spring, new programs, new optimism and rejuvenated clergy, back from their vacations.

Prayer also needs to be an integral part of September because everything moves along so well with all the new beginnings – until it doesn't.

What happens? Weren't those new beginnings what we wanted after all?

ANGLICAN FELLOWSHIP OF PRAYER



It is all about having control of the decision.

What do we do when we feel we have no control? We certainly can become anxious and upset. Turning to God through prayer can relieve some of the anxiety.

Philippians 4:6 says: "Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns."

For me, the prayer is often simple: "God, do you care about any

of this, or am I just making a problem where none exists? In your plan for the world, does this really matter?" Then I wait.

Pray, put your trust in God and listen for an answer. The answer may be anything from "Get over yourself. It isn't about you" to "You need to express your concerns", but God will answer and give direction. Just knowing that can reduce the stress of a change with which you disagree.

Prayer should be a prime component of the month of September (and all months) for everyone as we move forward with the inevitable changes in our church.

Libi Clifford is an AFP Huron Executive.

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Canada Day backyard party: Community building gathering

Lambton and Area Ecumenical Refugee Committee's (LAERC's) Canada Day party 2023, was a wonderful time for all – Buddhists, Muslims and Christians. This was the first time our committee and newcomers were able to get together since the Covid pandemic.

This annual gathering started in 2006, with the committee of eight, holding their monthly July meeting in the backyard of the Chair, Wilma and her husband, Del Stewart, along with a newcomer, mother of the first family that LAERC had sponsored, in February that year.

Nelcy shared her story, of being kidnapped by the paramilitary and her harrowing escape from being murdered and how grateful she was to LAERC for sponsoring her and her family and how thankful she was to have her three boys and herself, safe in Canada. She now owns and operates a very successful Mexican style restaurant, with great food, salsa dancing nights and it is a busy, popular place in Leamington.



"Hospitality to all": Canada Day 2023 backyard party organized by Lambton and Area Ecumenical Refugee Committee

Each year, the numbers at our Canada Day celebration vary, with between fifty and ninety gathering, but we never know ahead of time. Some years, many of the parents may have to work at their greenhouse jobs, so arrive later. Only once has it rained, but we moved everyone inside and still enjoyed the food and fellowship, and we all cleaned up together.

Our committee members, fourteen at present, from the Anglican, Presbyterian, United, Roman Catholic, Mennonite, &

Lutheran churches and the wider community, work together to raise funds to sponsor one family a year. We financially fully support them for one year, and assist them in settling into their new community - helping them complete needed paper work, putting them in touch with government settlement services, registering for schools, assisting them to access medical and dental services as needed, providing rides to appointments, signing kids up for local sports teams, etc. So far, we have sponsored

22 family units, that's 99 people, from infants to grandparents, plus 24 babies that have been born since they arrived: fifteen of these family groups through the Anglican Church, seven through the Presbyterian Church.

We keep in touch with the families after their sponsorship is ended and gather with them to celebrate birthdays, graduations, arrival anniversaries and other special occasions. Canada Day is one of those community building gatherings. The kids love the time in the pool while their parents visit and enjoy relaxing together. Hotdogs are BBQ'ed, including halal, and most people bring a dish to share – many from their culture and a taste delight for all.

Many of the children recognize other kids from their school and enjoy playing together with their families there too.

For the committee, it is very rewarding and heart-warming to see how the little ones have grown and changed, hear about successes in school, new jobs,

new homes and so on, and to know that the little we do, really does make a difference in the lives of these refugees and their future generations.

The families seemed so happy to relax in a safe place, with people they can trust, and to be together. Many of the children recognized each other from school. To have fun in a social setting, with their families there, strengthened their relationships and gave them a stronger feeling of belonging and more confidence.

For some, it was maybe a time when, for a few hours, they didn't think of the disasters, and war, and sickness, and loss and sadness, and the worry for relatives and friends still living under those conditions, and maybe a little more hope for a better future crept into their minds.

Hospitality to all! A Summer Feast!

Text and photo: Wilma Lamb Stewart, LAERC chairperson. Wilma has worked with the diocesan Refugee Committee for over a decade.

Under the Proud Anglican banner



Bishop Todd at St. Paul's following the Pride Parade on July 23

Thank you to everyone who joined us at St. Paul's following the Pride Parade in London on July 23, 2023.

Once again all were invited to walk together under the Proud Anglican banner.

With the support of the Diocese of Huron, Proud Anglicans and the Deanery of London we came together to celebrate at St. Paul's Cathedral.

Thank you to the members of St. Jude's, St. Paul's Cathedral and St. Mark's for your hard work decorating the hall, preparing and serving the food. We had over 100 guests!!

We look forward to seeing you all next year for our third annual gathering at the Cathedral.

If you are interested in joining in the planning of next year's gathering, please email hbooth@huron.anglican.ca, interested in taking part in the parade, please email proudanglicanshuron@gmail.com

A church full of – bicycles!

On Wednesday, June 28, two trucks full of bicycles arrived at Trinity Simcoe.

The collection and transportation of the donated bicycles was organized by Fr. Kevin George from St. Aidan's Parish in London. The bicycles were collected for the Huron Hispanic & Migrant Farmworkers Outreach Ministry.

Forty bikes were taken to Tillsonburg, and the remaining bicycles were stored in the church at Simcoe.

On Thursday (June 29) and Friday (June 30) evening, the remaining bicycles were gifted to workers at the Ministry dinners.

125 reflective safety jackets were donated from Trinity

Parish in Port Burwell. Andy Anderson organized the collection and distribution of these items to the workers.

"This amazing sharing of resources and goodwill is a clear demonstration of the strength and benefit of being part of such a generous diocesan family", said Rev. Paul Sherwood, Rector of Trinity Simcoe.



Huron Hispanic and Migrant Farmworkers Outreach Ministry had a busy and very successful summer

A holy mess (with a big splash) coming soon to All Saints!



By Rev. Marty Levesque

Go big or go home! This all-out philosophy puts all of one's effort into an enterprise, to experience something to its fullest, to be extravagant.

Go big or go home is a Gen-X philosophy that encourages one to be bold. And it is one taken to heart at All Saints' Anglican Church in Waterloo as we continue through the construction of the new church and the SideWalk Community Centre.

Many years ago, while a student at Huron University College, one of my professors, Ven Jay Koyle, encouraged us to always go big with the sacraments. He advocated that not a little dab would do in baptism, but to make a big splash so to speak. And Jay was not the only mentor of mine that

spoke of the abundance of the sacraments frequently.

Both Canon Greg Smith and Rev Rae Fletcher, may they both rest in peace and rise in glory, always taught me that more was better. Help the symbol of the sacrament tell the story of God's abundant, great, and endless love for the world. Don't just have a little water or a little bit of oil in baptism but make a holy mess!!

One of the new features in the new church is a full immersion baptismal font, the first permanent full immersion font in the Diocese of Huron (aside from Lake Huron itself). Sitting below the altar platform, the new font is in the centre of the community.

Most fonts find their place at the back of the church, symbolizing baptism as a requirement for entrance into the church and worship of our

Lord. Ancient churches even had separate baptistries so that candidates wouldn't even enter the church until ritually joined to the community in the waters of new birth.

At All Saints, we wanted to make initiation into the community of believers a central focus of the community and as such the font needed to be front and centre. We want people who join the community or renew their vows to experience baptism the way our Lord experienced baptism in the river Jordan, fully immersed.

We are looking forward to many years of welcoming newcomers to God's family in the new font and giving praise to God for the many who will renew their vows in the water of new life each year when celebrate St. Jean Baptiste each June.

Rev. Marty Levesque is the rector of All Saints', Waterloo.

Ecumenical service of evening prayer

At 7:30pm on Monday, June 12, clergy and laity gathered for a special Ecumenical service of Evening Prayer at All Saints Lutheran-Anglican Church in Guelph.

The service was organized by the Lutheran-Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue committee (LARC) which includes the Eastern Synod of the Evan-

gelical Lutheran Church in Canada, The Anglican Dioceses of Huron and Niagara and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Hamilton.

During the liturgy people brought water from Lake Erie, Lake Huron, Lake Ontario, The Conestogo, Credit, Grand, Nith and Speed rivers and the Marden creek. The waters were

poured into the font and blessed. The water was then used by the bishops, who were present, to water four nannyberry saplings (*Viburnum lentago*) to be planted somewhere in each diocese. This is to be symbolic of nurturing new growth and relationships between the respective churches.

Rev. Paul Sherwood (LARC)

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The wisdom of the desert: Home for the Heart

By Annette Procnier

Home for the Heart is the title of the funding campaign launched this year by the Sisters of St. John the Divine to refurbish their Guest House which is the only Anglican residential retreat facility in Canada.

The title is a genuine reflection of the attitude shared by anyone who has had the opportunity to become engaged with this compelling community and spend time in their home. In this day and age when monasticism is not really an integral part of the average Christian experience, becoming connected to such



Prayer walking: Labyrinth at St. John the Divine Convent

a community is a rare and treasured gift.

The word 'monasticism' can conjure up many images for people. It is often seen as something ancient and separate from ordinary life, which in many ways it is, but it is also a way of being, that is deeply connected to the world as it strives to create a deeper

connection to God through prayer, service and community life lived under a rule of life embraced by its members. The Sisterhood of Saint John the Divine, an Anglican order of nuns, is Benedictine, and it lives under the rules of hospitality, honouring of creation, justice, respect for everyone

and the spiritual orientation toward prayer, scripture, and the seeking the presence of Christ in all things.

As an associate of the Sisters I have experienced the care, compassion and strength of being part of a community of believers and the solace that having a spiritual home provides. No matter where I live or what parish I am associated with, the constant presence of my Benedictine Rule of Life guides and accompanies me, as do the prayers, support, and encouragement of the Sisters.

Each day I find strength and a deepening of my faith through the daily office and my life of prayer which is

rooted in the Benedictine practice of reading scripture, meditation and listening. When worshipping with the Sisters I am always spurred to greater understanding when after each scripture passage the direction is to "Listen for the leading of the Spirit". This simple but meaningful phrase reminds me that it is the Spirit who guides and directs me and that my role is to listen and respond. Being part of a community of faith is a gift I treasure and look forward to continuing to nurture for the rest of my life.

Annette Procnier is a lay reader at St George's Goderich.

Anglican Church Women: Looking into the future

Diocesan ACW Future Committee

This issue of Huron Church News includes a copy of the Summary Report prepared by the Diocesan ACW Future Committee.

This report together with a more detailed report is the result of discussion over the past year to look at the future of the ACW here in Huron Diocese. The main two conclusions reached are that one size does not fit all and in order to continue communication is key.

The report was included in the ACW Annual Report and a copy of the detailed report has been sent to those

who have requested it. Both reports have been sent to the National ACW but we have not yet received a response. The conversation is continuing both at the National level and within other Diocesan ACW organizations.

Please read the Summary report and prayerfully think about the full content. As the ACW Future Committee continues discussions we are looking for furthering the dialogue beyond issues to growth. If you would like a copy of the full report, please email: acwfutures@gmail.com.

The Committee is looking for more participation as

we continue the conversation in the fall. If you would be interested in joining the team or wish to submit comments, please submit your contact information including your name, parish, email address and phone number to: acwfutures@gmail.com.

Be part of the team as we continue to build community and to build our New Normal as Women of the Anglican Churches in the Diocese of Huron! Your ideas will make it happen.

With appreciation for your support.

Jennifer Uttley, Diocesan ACW Future Committee Chair

Summary Report

At the April 2022 Annual Meeting, a motion was made for the formation of a committee to determine what the structure of the A.C.W. (Anglican Church Women) should be as the church moves forward into the future. The motion was: Many churches no longer have a formal ACW group, but the work gets done. ACW needs to reflect the modern reality. A committee should be formed to form a proposal for 2023.

A committee of ten members was formed that included representatives who volunteered to serve from active parish ACWs and members of the Diocese of Huron ACW Diocesan Council who were selected by the ACW Diocesan President. The demographics of the members include small and large churches, rural and urban. The members are seniors.

As the work got underway, it was evident that a proposal for 2023 would not be possible because of many factors. After discussion, the Diocesan ACW Council voted:

THAT the original motion to form a proposal for 2023 be set aside to allow the Committee to further discuss the many problems found and to look into possible solutions.

Issues identified

In Committee discussions and with input from deanery members, a number of issues were identified summarized following.

- Aging population of ACW participants. Some have died, have mobility issues, don't drive and are not fully electronically capable.
- Fear of disease keeps some from in person worship.
- Pandemic measures sped up global changes.
- The ACW has lost its overall direction and sense of community. Many do not identify as an Anglican Church Women member.
- Many don't want to come out to a "meeting" even after receiving many invitations.
- Some are already a Warden, on Parish Council, part of Altar/Chancel Guild, sing in choir ...
- Some have lost their church building

Conclusions

While there remain questions about the future of ACW, it became evident that one size does not fit all. It was noted years ago women's ministry had limited roles. Now in many parishes, women are heavily involved in everything around the church including Wardens and members of Parish Council so that the formal organization of the ACW often seems unnecessary. Much of the work is done by Parish Council committees with participation by both women and men.

Communication is key. If ACWs are to continue we need to tell who we are and what we do. The Diocesan ACW has been without a representative for Communication for some time. ACW ministries need to be highlighted at the Diocesan, deanery and parish level to spread the news. There is a need for intercommu-

nication. Deanery representatives serve an important role in communication.

An article in the March edition of HCN asked for more feedback from the Diocesan community. Currently we have not received any feedback. Is it indicative of lack of interest or not understanding the goal or do we need to communicate in a different mode?

Questions we could not answer include:

- Should we or could we change our name? What might it be?
- Should the structure of the ACW Diocesan Council /deanery ACW or parish ACW change, or do we completely disband them? Are our structures appropriate to our changing world?
- Should we make the rules flexible for each church/parish/community encouraging each ACW to operate as they wish but continue to communicate successes?
- What is the word from our National ACW? Is the National ACW looking into structure changes? No communication from the National ACW so is it needed?

Where do we go from here?

- If the Futures Committee is to continue, will the current members continue and if it continues, we recommend additional members to replace those who resigned.
- Have a follow-up article regarding the report presented at The ACW Annual asking for more input so that we can collect information from the larger community.
- Send the report to the National ACW for comment and ask for the status of their review.

ACW: More than a name

When the ACW was established in the 1960s, the first President wrote that ACW was more than a name. While the structure was developed to connect women together throughout Canada, most remain focused on their own parish. Many women remain committed to ministry and service sharing our common faith in Christ, even if they do not have an ACW.

Honouring gifts of Creation: Let justice and peace flow

By Rev. Chris Brouillard-Coyle

The Internet can be filled with pearls of wisdom. Recently I came across a story where a farmer tells his son the secret of life: The cow doesn't give milk. The message is meant to be simple. The cow doesn't give milk. The farmer must get up at four in the morning, walk through the corral full of manure, tie the tail, hobble the legs, sit on the stool, place the bucket, and milk the cow. In other words, people must do the work.

Hard work is important. Still, reading through this description of work, I find myself thinking that there is another metaphor imbedded in this story: The cow doesn't give milk. We take it from her. She really doesn't get a say in the matter as her tail is tied and legs hobbled. Her contribution really doesn't matter in this telling as the focus is on the work of the human. Yet, it doesn't matter how hard a human works, without the cow, there would be no milk.

SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE



Yes, I get that is a very simple statement as there are many different types of milk. Still, the point remains valid. We need cows, goats, sheep, almonds, oats, and other resources from creation to make the milk we consume.

What happens when we intentionally reorient our understanding of the process-

es to value the contributions of creation? What does it look like to give thanks to the cow for what she has provided? What does it look like to see the cow as a beloved creation of the Creator? What does it look like to continually remember that our work is not the sole contributor to the benefits we enjoy?



What if the secret of life, the secret to our sustainability, is that we need to fully acknowledge all that is necessary for us to have milk? What happens if we pause to consider that the cow needs food from the land to produce milk and that food needs soil, and sunlight, and rain to grow? What if we realize there is inherent wisdom in creation that creates opportunities for farmers to acquire milk and processes and people through which that milk is bottled and delivered to stores so that we can purchase and consume it? What does it look like for us to give thanks truly and humbly for all aspects of creation and all those people who enable milk to be available to us?

What would it look like for us to change the message: 'the cow doesn't give milk', to something more akin to 'creation and hard work make it possible for the cow to share her milk with us'? To what extent would this change of focus challenge us to treat cows and soil and people with greater respect and dignity?

The Season of Creation is

fast approaching. This year's theme is "Let Justice and Peace Flow". This is our opportunity to consider what it looks like to let justice and peace flow in our world. This season invites us to intentionally reflect on our relationship with Creation and with one another. To what extent do we value what God has made? To what extent do we respect the dignity of everything and everyone that contributes to the resources we consume? How can we know better and do better?

The Season of Creation begins September 1 and extends through October 4. Resources are available at <https://seasonof-creation.org/>. This website includes a celebration guide and links to videos and resources to help individuals and congregations celebrate this season. May we all take time to honour God's gift of Creation in ways that enable Justice and Peace to Flow this year and beyond.

Rev. Chris Brouillard-Coyle is a tri-chair of SEJH and a tri-chair of Justice League of Huron.

grappling with meaning-making and identity.

The resonance of "Barbie" within the culture illustrates and exposes for the Church just what the spiritual yearnings of the day are. People are struggling to differentiate themselves outside of the constraints of gender roles and the standards of success and perfection dictated by capitalist patriarchy. They are seeking to connect with and gain the approval of their Creator, whether they acknowledge that Creator to be God or not. They are struggling to embrace and define identities for themselves that are nuanced and authentic to the human experience. The Church has the theological and spiritual resources to help people address the themes exposed by "Barbie", which is perhaps the most surprising entry point for us into the world of secular pop culture. The phenomenon that is "Barbie" offers an opportunity to open a conversation in our families and communities about existence, meaning, and identity. To quote Aqua's "Barbie Girl": Come on Barbie, let's go party!

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The existential longing of "Barbie"

The following reflection contains spoilers for the "Barbie" film, proceed with caution!

Love her or hate her, the Barbie doll has been a staple of popular culture since her invention in 1959.

Although the popularity of Barbie has waned in recent decades, there exists enough brand recognition and nostalgia for generations of women for the newly released "Barbie", directed by Greta Gerwig, to be a smash hit. It is currently on track to make \$1 billion at the box office and has been hailed as a critical darling.

I myself have seen it twice, the first for the purposes of this column and the second because I found myself delighted by its depth, nuance, and theological potential. We must be honest, this film is undoubtedly a 2-hour commercial for Mattel products, but it is also a thoughtful meditation on womanhood, the successes and failures of feminism, masculinity, capitalism, motherhood, and even existence itself. What was thought to be a fun, fizzy popcorn movie about North America's favourite girl-boss doll is catching audiences off-guard with its exploration about what it means to be alive, embodied, and fulfilled. Two things can be true at once!

Margot Robbie's "Stereotypical Barbie" gets a taste for the



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REV. ALLIE MCDUGALL

struggles and challenges of womanhood through the lens of Gloria, a disenchanting and depressed working mom who has been playing with her adolescent daughter's dolls. Barbie gets a taste of existential dread, self-loathing, and yearning that are incompatible with the plastic perfection of Barbieland. In the process of learning how strange and difficult human existence is, Barbie also learns how enriching and beautiful life can be when people (women especially) are not constrained by stereotyping or pressure to conform to an impossible standard.

Barbie's journey leads her back to her creator – quite literally. In the third act, the spirit of Ruth Handler, the inventor of Barbie dolls takes a prominent role in the transformation from doll to human and the two share the moment in which Barbie takes on humanity as mother and daughter, Creator and creation.



The scene evokes Martin Buber's I-Thou dynamic when Barbie declares to Ruth that she no longer desires to be the idea, but the one who does the imagining. The transformation from object to subject is ultimately what grants her humanity. Atop this realization, popstar Billie Eilish sings "What Was I Made For?", written specifically for the film's soundtrack. The poignancy of this climactic scene has been catching viewers off-guard with its symbolic power, this writer included.

The wild success of the film indicates that the deeper themes of "Barbie" are striking a chord within this cultural and existential moment. Greta Gerwig, the director

What can I give Him, poor as I am?

By Ven. Graham Bland

"The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;—
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!"



In 1807, William Wordsworth laments the loss of our humanity in the Industrial Revolution: "We have given our hearts away!"

This may be a commentary on our own times, too. Except

now, our losses may even be compounded. The economic machine grinds down and threatens our human nature and is an existential danger for the wider Nature to which we belong. 'Growth' is the watchword - yet, with enormous irony, it only signals our

Be ready to shift your social media presence!

Twitter, once a vibrant and accessible platform, has gradually become a victim of its new owner's chaotic whims, making it increasingly difficult for users to engage and communicate effectively.

After Elon Musk's purchase of the platform, it introduced various features and changes that have contributed to its dwindling usability, leaving many users frustrated and disenchanted.

Twitter's struggle with misinformation and the spread of fake news has further deteriorated its usability. After firing most of its staff, efforts to curb the dissemination of false information, misleading tweets are finding their way onto the platform in greater quantity, sowing confusion and mistrust



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REV. MARTY LEVESQUE

among users. This issue has made it increasingly challenging for individuals to discern between reliable and unreliable sources of information.

The rise of bots and automated accounts has also impacted Twitter's usability negatively. These automated accounts often engage in spammy behaviour, flooding the platform with repetitive, irrelevant, and often hateful content. As a result, genuine user interactions are buried

diminishment. "We lay waste our powers ... We have given our hearts away."

Later in the 1800s, in some other 'Bleak Midwinter', Christina Rossetti asks and answers:

"What can I give Him, poor as I am?"

If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;

If I were a Wise Man, I would do my part;

Yet what I can I give Him: give my heart."

Consider the world of difference between 'giving our hearts' and 'giving our hearts away'. Wordsworth laments that by our 'getting and spend-

ing' we sacrifice of our hearts. He longs for us to recover our hearts, to 'spend' our days, our energies and our lives in harmony with Nature, rather than at odds with Her.

'Give your heart' ... to something or to someone who cares about you – God or Nature – and your heart swells within you to empower you and enlarge your spirit.

'Give your heart away' ... to someone or something who cares not a bit about you – and you shrink, lose your power and your spirit is diminished.

Stewardship – the subject of this article – is about a choice

I make as a disciple of Jesus. It is not so much a choice about how I use my time, talents and treasure. All of that flows from a more important choice ...

Disciples of Jesus ask: Have I chosen to 'give my heart away' to some lesser god? Must I, therefore, choose to reclaim it and 'give my heart' again to God's will and ways? For in God, my heart and soul will grow and thrive, and all Nature will sing in me once more.

What can I give Him, poor as I am? ... Give my heart.

Graham Bland writes for the Diocese of Huron Stewardship Committee.

as a player in this space.

The next is Mastodon, which is a decentralized open-sourced federated social media platform, to which anybody can contribute code, and which anyone can run on their own server infrastructure, if they wish, or join servers run by other people within the federated network. The learning curve is a little steeper for the average user and uptake on the platform has been slow.

Finally, there is Meta's Threads, linked to an Instagram account. And while the transition to Threads is much easier, especially if you are already familiar with Instagram, I worry about one company owning all the social media platforms. Facebook, Instagram and Threads would all be

under the one banner of Meta and Mark Zuckerberg.

It will be interesting over the next year to see which platform will become the preferred destination. For the church at this moment, the most logical action is to migrate to Threads. But a word of warning, the landscape may shift quickly, especially once Bluesky moves from members only to an open platform.

The key to this shifting landscape is adaptability, be ready to shift your church's social media presence to be where the mission field is going rather than where it has been.

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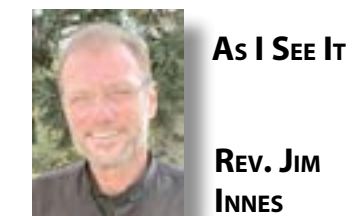
Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely

In 1209, Pope Innocent III persecuted a particular anti-Catholic sect, the Cathars.

They spoke against the church's many faults, not just rejecting critical aspects of Catholicism but the authority of the Pope. Several hundred known Cathars resided in the peaceful City of Beziers in Southern France. The Pope commissioned Crusaders to weed out the unwanted.

To save the Pope's loyal followers, The Bishop of the Church in Beziers tried to broker an agreement in which the community would hand over the supposed "heretics" or, at least, have all the Catholics leave before the bloodshed.

The City refused. Catholics and Cathars had lived there together for many years in supportive harmony.



AS I SEE IT

REV. JIM INNES

On July 22, the Crusaders attacked. All inside Beziers, regardless of age and sex, and including priests, were slaughtered. The number of deaths totaled almost 20,000. A number that is likely too high but underscores the level of destruction and violence.

Before the full-scale attack, the Abbot in charge (assigned by the Pope) was asked by a troubled Crusader, "Sir, what shall we do, for we cannot distinguish between the faithful and the heretics." The Abbot,

anxious that many Cathars, fearing death, would pretend to be Catholic, replied, "Kill them all, for the Lord knoweth them that are His."

It's hard to understand the cold-heartedness of the Abbot. We knew the early church had to chisel out a place for itself amongst people of different cultures and traditions. We also understand that some sincere people felt the need to protect the Christian story from being either watered down or manipulated for personal gain, which can all lead to an assumption that the church lived in fear.

And because of the church's actions, exemplified in the bloody massacre of Beziers, the more Power it gained in the world, the more that fear grew alongside it. Nobody wanted to lose what they had. The more they had, the more they needed

to fight to keep it.

Is there a lesson here? Indeed, and it is one we all know. 'Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.' When one's power increases, without extreme caution, one's morality decreases. And too often, the backslide is justified by some self-protective excuse. Or some conviction to a cherished cause.

Though we are more open-minded regarding race, sexuality, and faith perspectives, we still have built a sense of entitlement into our culture. In other words, stability is priced more than vulnerability, control is preferable to be controlled, and saving for the future is considered more prudent than letting it 'all ride' today.

Yet the very nature of these values demands an increase in

our power base. Fatefully, as the culture emphasizes this entitlement, it pits one against the other. And as we are inarguably systemically dependent on cooperation (a lesson well taught by Covid), we find ourselves in a quandary.

Let me entertain a bit of preacher pride; Jesus teaches us to let the weeds grow with the grain because as you cut away the weeds, you risk destroying the fruit. As I see it, success is not in Power gained but Power given away in an attitude of gratitude, servitude, and fortitude. As some would say, it is a 'hero's journey.' It builds up and only very cautiously knocks down.

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On being Christian... and being Canadian

In recent days there has been some discussion about whether or not it is a good idea to offer the Canadian Citizenship ceremony as an online experience.

I am firmly of the belief that would deprive anyone seeking to become a citizen of Canada of an essential experience as their life's journey takes a new and exciting direction. Raising your hand, swearing or affirming your allegiance to your new country of choice, is a crucial conclusion to the lengthy citizenship process. Standing up and declaring what it is that you believe, is not an unfamiliar experience for those who declare, in a public setting, each and every Sunday, that they are followers of Jesus Christ.

Sunday, July 2 of this year was in the midst of the Canada Day Weekend. As wildfires swept across the landscape, we were all invited to celebrate our identity as Canadians and give thanks that we live in this wonderful country. We prayed for the firefighters, those who were displaced from their homes and those who had lost everything because of the cataclysmic devastation of the wild.

As an immigrant, I truly value and appreciate the opportunities which this country has given to me for more than



**A VIEW FROM
THE BACK PEW**

**REV. CANON
CHRISTOPHER
B. J. PRATT**

half a century. (I admit that statement sounds a bit dramatic, but it is legitimate, so why not!?) I held a Bible firmly in my hand as I took the Oath of Citizenship and made my commitment to claim Canada as my home.

The Bible had been given to me at the time of my ordination as a priest. I had marked the place which had served as the inspiration for the motto for Canada which appears on the Canadian Coat of Arms.

(This is a quiz... the answer is at the end of this article.)

On that Sunday morning in July, it seemed to me, especially since the wording has changed in recent years, that as a community of faith we could also celebrate our identity as

Canadian citizens by offering the Canadian Oath of Citizenship. We affirmed that part of our identity as we said together:

I swear (or affirm), that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to His Majesty King Charles the Third, King of Canada, his Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada, including the Constitution which recognizes and affirms the Aboriginal and treaty rights of First Nations, Inuit and Metis peoples and fulfil my duties as a Canadian Citizen.

An interesting result of that experience was that after the service, there were some members of the congregation who approached me to indicate that had been a meaningful moment for them, because, for whatever reason, that had been the first time they had ever been invited to celebrate their Canadian Citizenship by offering the Citizenship Oath.

Because I was going to be returning later on in the month, I also gave the congregation some homework. I asked them to find out what are the "duties" of a Canadian Citizen.

A couple of weeks later, I returned to the congregation to discover that a number of people had taken me seriously and had done their homework!

The duties of a Canadian Citizen include:

- Obeying the law
 - Taking responsibility for oneself and one's family
 - Serving on a jury
 - Voting in elections
 - Helping others in the community
 - Protecting and enjoying our heritage and environment
- (Taken from a Government of Canada Citizenship website)

If all of this was a journey of exploration into the world of personal identity as a Canadian Citizen, it becomes important to compare and contrast that experience with what it means for us to declare our identity as people of faith. On a frequent basis we proclaim our identity as followers of Jesus when we boldly proclaim, "I Believe", as we worship. We have the opportunity from time to time to declare how we will put our faith into action when we state that, in the words of the Baptismal Covenant, that, with God's help we will:

- Continue in the Apostles' teaching and fellowship
- Persevere in resisting evil
- Proclaim by word and example
- Seek and serve Christ
- Strive for justice and peace
- Respect, sustain and renew the life of the Earth.

It is interesting to note the parallels and commonality of these two essential elements of our identity when we declare ourselves to be both a person of faith and a member of a national community. Each facet of our life needs to be a focus of regular review. Does our frequent declaration of our faith numb us to the expectations which a life of faith demands? Does the infrequency of our declaration of citizenship leave us in ignorance of what is expected of us as members of Canadian society?

There are many facets of our lives which serve to define how others see us. As we look into the mirror each day, we need to be comfortable with how we define ourselves.

By the way, I had promised you the answer to the question regarding Canada's motto. It is "From Sea to Sea". (Psalm 72: 8)

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It's for the birds: See, hear, pause, pray...

This summer I was able to vacation and visit family, for a short time, on beautiful Salt Spring Island in B.C. Wonderful company, wonderful adventures, wonderful food and wonderful landscapes.

If you have never been to Salt Spring Island, it is an island that shows off the beauty of creation. Tall firs and cedars cover the sides of the roads and rising up with the mountains. Abundant green ferns and mosses provide a richness of ground cover that on every trail you expect to see small fairy folk and gnomes working away on their daily chores.

My attention on this trip seemed to be captured by the birds. It is so silent and remote, where I stayed, it was impossible to miss the cawing of the crows. However, what I found more striking, than the cawing, was the shadows of the crows in flight projected on the tall fir trees surrounding the home where I stayed. (Remember doing shadow hand puppets on the wall as



**LAUREL
PATTENDEN**

Jesus gifted us with peace, but we refuse to unwrap that gift. As a result, our hearts have grown dull, our ears do not hear, and our eyes have become shut.

kids.) These "crow shadows" flew by, hundreds of feet up on the trees. Weaving in and out. entertaining and mesmerizing me as I sat on the porch. Silence and shadows.

On my arrival and departure, I was able to stay in Victoria for a few nights. Now, while in Victoria it was not the sighting of the seagulls that caught my attention. It was



**Laurel
Pattenden.
MANY
FEATHERS.
Ink and
markers,
2021**

their cry and squawking in the late evening as the city gets quiet. The sound would penetrate the walls and windows of the apartment. It was as if their cry was a monastic call to become silent and rest.

I was hoping to see some ravens on Salt Spring Island, and I may very well have seen some without knowing it as I am not a "birder". However, I did see a small bronze statue of one in Victoria. The words accompanying the statue said that the raven is a songbird. In

fact, the largest songbird. I was also hoping to hear the owls at dusk on Salt Spring Island. Unfortunately, grandma had priorities as this was our usual Disney movie time (plus junk food that goes with the movie!) and did not hear any owls.

There was lots of other wildlife, more unique to the rain forest coast, to see and admire but it was the crows and the seagulls that got me to pause. Interestingly, I can see both birds where I live in Ontario. Perhaps it was the "pause" I

got on vacation to be observant of their presence.

God commands us to rest. To remember to take sabbath time but we usually don't. Jesus gifted us with peace, but we refuse to unwrap that gift. As a result, our hearts have grown dull, our ears do not hear and our eyes have become shut. We prefer the "daily grind" that does exactly that. Grinds away at us. Dulls our hearts, plugs our ears and shuts our eyes. If not, why did I not marvel at the crows and seagulls in my own backyard?

Perhaps bird "spotting" and their songs is our monastic call to prayer. Both a morning prayer and an evening prayer call to open our eyes, sharpen our hearing and cast off our dullness of heart. Birds. See. Hear. Pause. Pray.

Repeat as often as the heart needs.

Laurel is retired and likes to spend her time in her art studio.

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